



**EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH COMMUNICATIONS
DISTRICT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Public Hearing and Meeting Minutes
February 20, 2024 – 2:00 p.m. CDT**

**East Baton Rouge Sheriff’s Office
8900 Jimmy Wedell Drive, Building B
Baton Rouge, LA 70807**

The East Baton Rouge Parish Communications District Board of Commissioners met at the East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff’s Office on the 20th day of February 2024 for a duly noticed regular public meeting.

The public meeting was called to order by Chairman Gautreaux.

Commissioner McDavid gave the Invocation.

Commissioner Designate Pease led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Chairman called roll:

Present: Chairman Sid Gautreaux, Commissioner Designate Stephen Branscum (by Commissioner Wade Evans), Commissioner Designate Keith Pease (by Commissioner Darnell Waites), Commissioner David McDavid, Commissioner Michael Kimble, Commissioner Michael Denicola, and Commissioner Myron Daniels

Absent: None

The Chairman found that a quorum existed.

Others Present Included The Following:

Director Jim Verlander, Legal Counsel Henry Olinde, Scott Lazarone CPA, Joe Thompson (EBRPCD), Brenda Welch (EBRPCD), Todd Campbell (EBRPCD), David Luker (EBRSO), Ricky Klug (EBRSO), George O’Connor (365 Labs), Bassam Harb (General Informatics), Chief Gerry Tarleton (SGFPD), and Chief Danny Kimble (ZFD).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Kimble moved to approve the minutes of the November 15, 2023 meeting. Commissioner Denicola seconded that motion. The motion unanimously passed.

OLD BUSINESS:

Financial Report

The financial report was presented by Scott Lazarone, CPA.

The presented financials are through December 31, 2023. Cash is \$11.5 million and fund balance is at \$12.5 million. Expenses are under budget. Primarily as a result of the fee increase, the total service revenues of \$6.9 million are \$865,000 more than budget. Interest income was \$32,000 which is \$72,000 over budget.

Commissioner McDavid moved that the financial report be accepted. Commissioner Kimble seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried.

North Tower Project

Todd Campbell and Henry Olinde reported that the geotechnical report has been received and that work on bid specifications has started.

CAD and 911 Upgrade

Joe Thompson presented on these items.

CAD update was presented first: District personnel met with Central Square personnel and made it clear that the District is not satisfied with the current status of the CAD program. It appears that the solutions that Central Square is offering (i.e. upgrade) are very promising.

Because the last CAD upgrade did not go smoothly, District personnel are preparing for the upcoming CAD upgrade to guard against potential repeat problems.

Mr. Thompson reported that the 911 upgrade project is progressing, but issues are being encountered:

- A software upgrade was recently received.
- There were some problems with AT&T last month. These were resolved. There have also been some issues with T-Mobile.

- There were issues with CouchDB and these appear to have been solved.
- There have been some problems with the call handling system.
- This morning NGA911 provided another update relating to text to 911. This update appeared to be causing some call issues so it was stopped until those issues could be resolved.
- In response to administration's response, NGA911 is going to provide front end recording software on a separate server to allow the retrieval of recordings without slowing down the production server.
- Work is proceeding on the IRR (call taker immediate replay) feature.
- The District hopes to move its main trunks to NGA911 soon.

District administration is holding NGA911's feet to the fire to get the 911 upgrade project successfully and safely completed.

Commissioner McDavid asked whether it might be a good idea to send users and possible Board members to the upcoming conference in May so that they can participate in discussions with Central Square to make sure the District is getting what it wants from Central Square. Mr. Thompson advised that District representatives had a special meeting with Central Square management at the last Central Square Engage conference and expressed the District's concerns about the CAD system and this dialogue is continuing.

Commissioner McDavid stated that the Board should consider allowing Board members to attend future conferences or meetings with Central Square to see what Central Square is doing to address problems and what Central Square's future plans are.

Mr. Thompson advised that there are other CAD systems that the administration is aware of and the CAD update is the "line in the sand" for the District. Mr. Thompson advised that implementing a new CAD would be a complex 18-month process. Mr. Thompson and Director Verlander voiced concerns that Tier 1 CAD software providers are being merged and consolidated and this is resulting in less choice, competition and service.

In response to questions, Director Verlander and Mr. Thompson advised that each agency pays for its own employees to attend CAD conferences. The District pays for its personnel to attend as part of its training budget. The conferences are very productive and helpful.

Commissioner Kimble expressed his concern about NGA911, which he has discussed on multiple occasions with Director Verlander. He noted that this month BRFD had 23

issues relating to dropped calls. He requested that someone from NGA911 come to the next Board meeting to discuss the Board's concerns and problems with NGA911.

Director Verlander advised that some issues with NGA911 have been rectified. One concerning issue, a 7-second pause when transferring calls, has been addressed. There was also an issue involving the location of the BRFD911 and BRFDHQ screen icons which caused confusion amongst call takers. This item has also been addressed.

Commissioner Kimble noted there appeared to be a dropped call problem between SGFPD and BFD and between EMS and BRFD. There were 23 issues and that was a lot. Dottie O'Neal (BRFD) confirmed that these problems that have been experienced included problems that were experienced this morning. Ms. O'Neal confirmed that she has opened tickets on these events so they can be addressed.

One problem that Ms. O'Neal identified is that the 911 system's recording feature does not work because it only records one side of a conversation. Director Verlander advised that both sides of the conversation are actually recorded but only 1 side can be played back by the call taker. NGA911 and administration are working on a fix for this,

Director Verlander also reported that there is an issue with audio delay. This is related to a piece of equipment called an M22 that is related to the type of headsets being used. Work is being done to simply eliminate this piece of equipment.

Commissioner Kimble noted that the District is 5 months into the migration process and needs to do something to get the issues fixed.

Director Verlander advised that he spoke with NGA911 executives and expressed his and the board's concerns and frustrations, but NGA911 could not attend today's board meeting due to short notice. Director Verlander intends to have NGA911 executives attend the next Board meeting to respond to the Board's questions and concerns. Commissioner Kimble reiterated his concerns. Director Verlander also noted that if all entities can migrate to the NGA911 system it would eliminate 70%-80% of the problems which are caused by trying to straddle more than one system. He also advised that this cannot happen until we get the issues ironed out.

Director Verlander advised the board that he had expressed his dissatisfaction directly to the NGA911 CEO.

Commissioner Daniels noted that other agencies, including Livingston Parish 911, are completely on NGA911 and asked whether they are having the same problems the District is having. Director Verlander responded that Livingston 911 has completely migrated to NGA911 and is not having the problems we are having. Commissioner Daniels expressed his belief that the Board should approve the final switchover to NGA911.

Commissioner Kimble asked what happens when a call is dropped. Ms. O'Neal explained the process that occurs when a call gets dropped to re-contact the caller.

Commissioner Denicola asked what would happen if the NGA911 center goes down. Mr. Thompson responded that the District will be switched over to a different region. Each region has multiple data centers that would also be available. Calls will also roll over to other agencies if an agency goes down.

Commissioner Denicola asked whether the current Intrado system has text to 911 capability. Mr. Thompson replied that it did. He also stated that the District would not go to NGA911 text to 911 until Livingston Parish had successfully implemented it and all upgrades and patches have been done.

Commissioner Denicola asked whether the NGA network is secure. Director Verlander and Mr. Thompson response that the network is independent and secure.

Bassam Harb (General Informatics) asked whether it would be possible to use SGFPD as a back-up if the Harding Blvd. center went down. Mr. Thompson replied that both SGFPD and the BUCC could be used in that event.

Travis Snyder (EBRSO) noted that the star codes for EBRSO and COZ are different and this creates the need for extra effort for call takers. An effort is underway to make the star codes the same to eliminate this issue. Chairman Gautreaux expressed his desire to get these issues fixed as soon as possible. Director Verlander and Mr. Synder advised that the issue is being resolved. Messrs. Thompson and Verlander advised the Board that this internal issue should disappear when the switch is completely made to NGA911.

Director Verlander reiterated that he will have NGA911 personnel at the next Board meeting. The Chairman advised that everyone should prepare the questions that they want to ask.

RMS

Commissioner Daniels advised the Board that BRPD is moving off of the 365Labs RMS system to Axon RMS. As a result, BRPD will not be making an RMS payment to the District after 2024. Director Verlander reminded the Board that the RMS contract with 365 Labs will be in effect through 2025, and the District will still have to make a payment to 365 Labs for RMS in 2025. Director Verlander stated that he and Mr. Olinde will explore the possible reduction of the 2025 payment in light of BRPD's leaving the system.

In response to concerns by Chairman Gautreaux, Commissioner Daniels advised that this RMS change would not affect other agencies.

Mr. Thompson expressed his belief that the changes could affect other agencies, such as the Constables Office. Commissioner Daniels advised that he would look into that.

NEW BUSINESS:

None

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Director Verlander presented on the proposed 4 new positions at the District: Applications Specialist, Technical Specialist, GIS Manager and Public Records Clerk. These positions are badly needed and were budgeted. In response to Commissioner Kimble's inquiry, Director Verlander confirmed that the creation of these 4 positions will not impact the amounts that the District has budgeted to pay for EMS employees, Commissioner Denicola moved that these 4 positions be authorized and created. Commissioner Kimble seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Daniels moved to adjourn. Commissioner Kimble seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.